

April 7, 1981

LB 111

SPEAKER MARVEL: You know, Senator Chambers, that we have never cut you off. Senator DeCamp.

SENATOR DeCAMP: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, I was gone the other day when the bill came up. It is one of the few times that I haven't been here this year. I was in court myself on some problems. And I am going to vote to raise the bill. I would like to address just a couple of the things Senator Chambers mentioned. The judiciary has been an issue around here every year since I have been here, and we always play the game on salaries. We have the county judges, the Municipal Court judges, the Comp Court judges, Supreme Court judges, District Court judges, and we kind of play games with them. I have watched it. I can remember in the past, Senator X would be mad that particular day because he got a speeding ticket or whatever and the judge gave him a heavy sentence, fined him too much or didn't dismiss the charge, why he would vote against the judges' pay bill. Somebody else would be mad because of this or that and they would put up a dozen amendments to decrease the judges' salary. The judiciary should be independent of us to a very significant degree so they can make decisions based upon the merits of the case. I think this system would go a long ways towards that. Whether it makes the Chief Justice more powerful or less powerful, I don't know. Whether judges have made any threats as has been implied by Senator Chambers, I don't know. But I will give you the best example, the best example of the opposite, and it was just a couple of years ago and the judges' pay raise bill had been killed that year, and I put a motion in to revive it and then I put a motion in to give them their pay increase they wanted, which I felt was reasonable. It was a very tight issue and we finally mustered 25 votes, and I felt, by golly, those judges will think old John hasn't been too bad. You may remember I had pending at that time my Supreme Court case on equalization. They promptly turned around, ruled against me in one of the most hideous decisions I have seen them render on a technicality of standing which they were wrong on, but it clearly indicated to me a little too clearly that they are about as independent over there as you are going to get, and I think they are going to maintain that, and this type of system would enhance that. So I support raising the bill, using it as our vehicle for addressing the judges' pay issue so we don't have half a dozen bills each year that are kind of used like political footballs. I have a separate reason also, one of the areas where there seems to be a little controversy in the judges' thing has to do with the Workmen's Comp, and I am putting whoever on alert that if the bill is